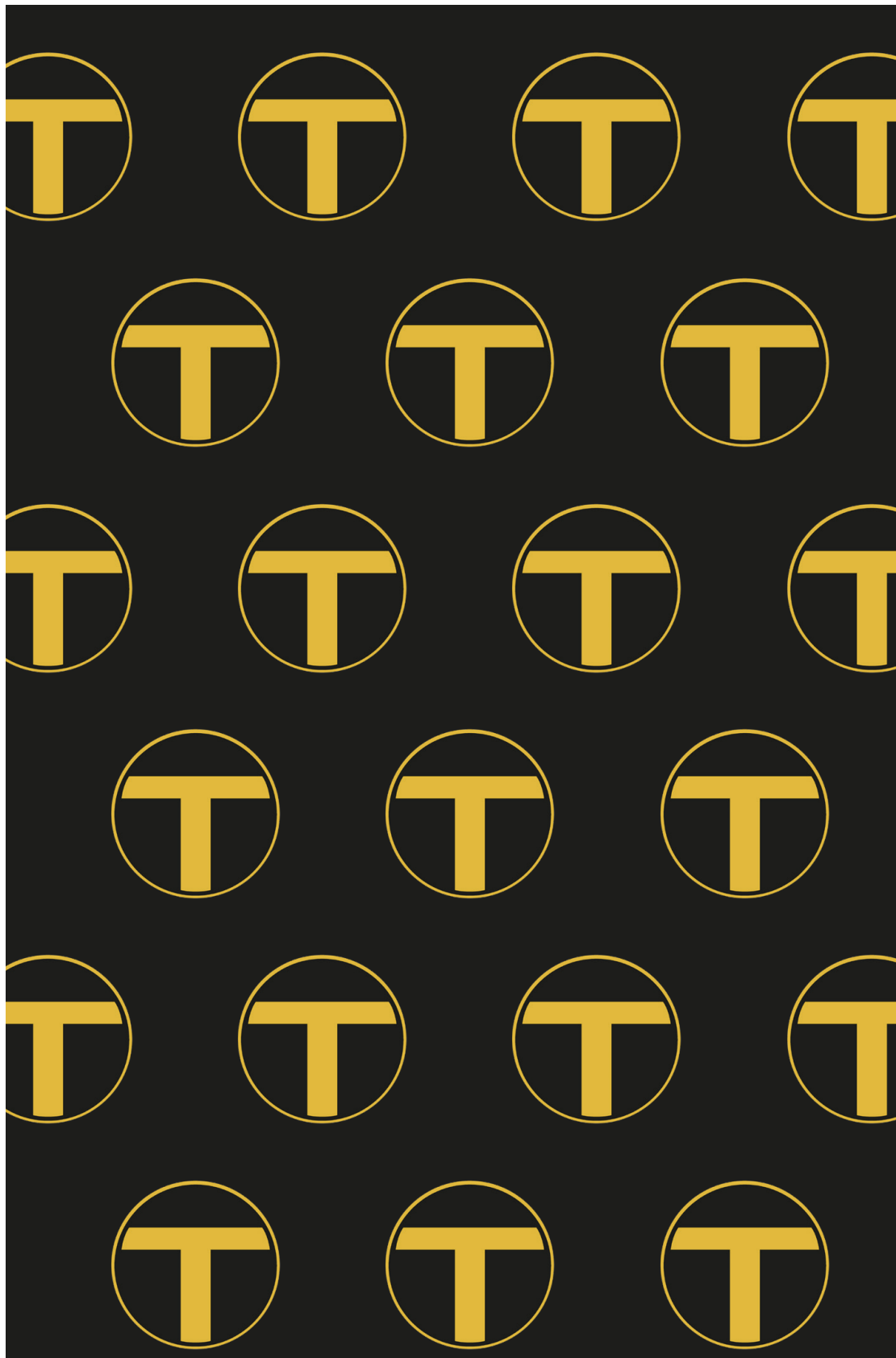


THINGS CHANGE

A TEEN TITANS ZINE







A Message from the Head Mod

“Thank you so much for ordering this zine! This project means a whole lot to me, and I’m glad that we were finally able to make it happen! Teen Titans has gotten me through some rough times, and I’m so glad that I can finally give back to the show that is always in my heart. This project would not have been possible without the incredible contributors and the mod team! Thank you so much for helping to make my dream a reality!”

Metathesis

Written by: Fallowfield

Have you ever felt like you were somebody else's dream? That the galaxies were resting beneath your eyelids, and you would appear in a different eon, on a different planet, under the light of a distant star. Could there be a larger power? Or maybe the larger power was you. Maybe lives were all so fleeting that it could be true, that everybody is its dream. Your dream.

Raven crossed her legs. She didn't like to think of how large it all was. Her personal world was large enough. Anything larger than that she wouldn't be able to keep in check. It was acceptable to her if there were more colors out there or new vistas, but she felt no need to see them. It took every ounce of her strength at any moment in the day to control this small area, pacing a square meter over and over and over. The small envelope around her body that she always held shut, her hands straining, but her face serene and still.

Because she had to. If she let this envelope gasp open, her face and heart flaring, it would always come, that whirlpool grasping her legs and pulling her down, swirling away into darkness. Then she could never escape. Its strength was more than she could ever dream to combat. The more she worried about it, the more it would laugh and pull her in. Her vision would swim all around, but the nausea of it was stolen away by a searing cold. What if one day she never came back?

If the universe was so large, how could she matter? How did one being have so much power to change it for the worse? Who was she if not Atlas as he held up the Earth, holding this door shut for all of eternity? She always thought of what Azar told her. She could become anything if she cleared her mind and let the space expand as the universe does, pressing on the edges until they buckled and let it grow even more.

“I will become the mountain, and move myself.”

That was the only way she could survive, if she wasn't such a small, frail being. Even if it was all just a ruse. Most of it was appearances. If she strode forward with such strength, her size wouldn't matter.

She wondered what it would have been like to have a sister. Maybe she hadn't had to be so alone, not such a singular, tiny pawn on such a large chessboard. But would they have both had to hold half of this weight? Maybe she wouldn't wish that on anyone.

There were always dreams, even with her best attempts to control them. Her biggest fear was to lash out during them, out of her control. But in her most common dream, it was quiet, and she saw an alien planet, and she heard them muttering. “Koriandr...” Maybe she was glad she was the only one of her kind. Nobody else could wreck her endeavors, only herself. Was being your own personal villain better than an outside force taking that role? She could keep tabs on her, personally guarding her cell.

If she had lived on Earth would it have been swallowed whole? Or would she have been able to run with her kite, to skin her knee, to roll down the hills? Could she have had a slumber party? Birthdays? And not fear for their lives? Could she have glared on, embarrassed by her parents in the typical way? Parents. Just two people living together, raising their child. She could have run and played in the neighborhood with her sister. She could have lived a short, but happy, life. Visiting the carnival, screaming on the roller coaster, eating cotton candy. Freedom. She could cry her eyes out after a broken heart. Letting the ghosts escape and not having to follow their every move.

So she always crossed her legs again and went back to what she'd been told. Azar had told her to count. 1, 2, 3, 4.... Press it inward, until it is a smooth black pearl in your hands. Inward, inward, inward.

X-X-X-X-X

Outward, outward, outward. Shine like the rays of the sun. Starfire was astounded by the size and possibility of the universe. It folded into an envelope to be opened in her hand. And boy, did she love to open it. Every day, she would open the curtains to this excitement, a gasp and then laughter. It wasn't just the birth of a star, but the birth of hundreds of stars.

Starfire loved training. She could take some of that size and possibility onto herself, as the heat spilled off her and into the atmosphere. She could grow in wisdom and courage and strength. She could eat from its table and feel it within her. Even if she was just a tiny being in comparison, she could become a mirror and reflect them, perhaps making the light somewhat her own. The stars opened their doors, telling her to borrow their light and harness it and spread it to the farthest corners of existence.

The powers came to her gradually over time, but as she grew older, they grew stronger and more diverse. She'd asked if they could give her strange dreams. Like premonitions. Many nights were spent tossing and turning. She'd felt twisted energy coming from her sister, even beyond the blinders of family covering her eyes. It couldn't be right. Sisters were supposed to be who you can trust no matter what, if all else fails.

But now she found herself standing across from her sister, the planets spinning around them. The dark flare in her eyes was unmistakable, but all Starfire felt was pain. It was like being the most glorious dwarf star, but slowly being eaten up into a black hole. It was remarkable, actually, that her sister was so strong, even as she was. She'd accomplished such strength without the gift of powers. Why couldn't that be enough?

The universe had visited her nursery, lying the golden pearls across her chest. There are always struggles in life, even surrounded by the richness of palaces, but this gift she had been given was a burden. Her people and the universe were one, so she had to have the eyes of

the universe, able to see past any one wish. But the wishes all stared at her and weighed on her, including that of her sister, and she couldn't deny that she was tempted to look away.

Before this, it had been rarely necessary. Tamaran would fold in on itself before it betrayed another. The image of her and her sister, seated underneath the suns, in glorious robes, ruling their beautiful planet, was what kept her going for such a long time. They had chosen her for the throne, but in what reality would she not share it with her family? It was unfathomable to her.

She wondered what it would have been like to have never had a sister. Maybe she would still be at home, in peace, her planet thriving. But she would have been seated on the throne alone. How could she rule? And what was the use of thinking this way? No matter what, it happened, and the universe regrets it. Or maybe it doesn't regret anything. Maybe it doesn't ever see someone so small, even if they were shining like a star. The stars in the sky were countless. And yet, despite it all, how could that be comforting?

She would always say: "I am not a mountain, but I can move one." She may not look like much, but she could open her mind and let everything else move on her behalf, with much more generosity than one would expect.

She also wondered what she would have liked on Earth as a child. Chamomile? Tea cakes? Chocolate frosting? Would she have learned that balancing act they call riding a bike? Would she have raced her sister, the corn fields whizzing by? Even if human lives are fleeting, maybe it could have turned out differently. Maybe if they were ordinary sisters, they would have been allies. Could they have even been friends, even in such a short, inconsequential life? They may have been nameless, but maybe they could have been free. Wasn't childhood supposed to be the time one didn't have to think about tall Death brandishing her silver scythe?

X-X-X-X-X

What was harder, holding up the world, all those eyes cast upon you? Or was it the vacuum, the heartbreaking weightlessness, of all that was lost? Those childhood evenings, stars low in the sky, the horizon rife with its dying colors. Was it that way on all the planets? Sitting cross legged in the grass, golden hands, the night breeze, the stars rising and setting as they do. But here they were, both under Earth's star, born light years apart, but yet have managed to find each other and exist on the same side of the sun. The duality was magnetic, as duality usually is. Darkness and light can share the same laughter, the same floor of a building, the same side of a battle. Light can be a warrior king, terrifying beyond all belief, and dark can be gentle and cradling, soothing. They'd learned these things their entire lives and strove for them.

Starfire held up her hands. Raven tilted her head, frowning. "What?"

"I learned it from some girls at the park. They call it 'patty cake'. I'm not sure what the name means, but the calisthenics are fun!"

Raven bit her lip, not responding for a long moment, then finally held up her hands, groaning inwardly at Starfire's pleased cry in response.

The grass isn't greener, all the poets say. But storied fate brought them here regardless. The rains had rained, and the stars had shone, and they'd felt it all, years and years of it. Could they still feel sisterhood? Maybe they could still have sisters, even if they weren't children anymore. Sisters to each other.









Continue?

Written by: Rosemary Arnold (kibasniper)

Garishly bright letters mocked Beast Boy as the controller slipped from his fingers. As he lost his last life in Mega Monkeys 4.2, he felt his soul ebb away from his body. He slumped into the couch cushions, his half-lidded gaze watching the numbers trickle down to zero, his screaming monkey subsequently jailed.

High scores flashed across the darkened screen. His final total of 650,000 should have made him smile. He assumed no one would have been able to beat him, but Raven's name crushed his initials, her solid score of 800,000 a marvelous sight to behold.

He didn't know when, how, or why she started playing. She wasn't one for noisy, cartoony video games, preferring her books and meditation over rapid gunfire and animated explosions. She had criticized the game when she found him staying up late, saying it was too annoying and ruining his sleep schedule, but the way her lips quirked into a terse grin when he completed a stage gave him the opportunity to ask if she wanted to join him, which she flatly declined.

Guess she took me up on it when I wasn't looking, he thought, shaking his head. Rolling his shoulders back, he grimaced as his bones popped. He rubbed a knot out of his neck, his own tenseness surprising him. His spine twinged, his posture crooking to the left as he leaned into a pillow, and although he managed to ease out the knot, a dull ache settled in the small of his back.

"Sit like that, BB, and you're gonna get a bad hunch."

His ears twitched, and an involuntary yelp spat past his fangs. Whipping around on the couch, his dinner plate eyes locked on to the smirking Cyborg, and he blurted, "Dude! When did you-?" He jabbed his finger at the double doors. "I didn't even hear you come in!"

“Man, I’ve been standing behind you for almost twenty minutes. I even made myself a sandwich around the ten minute mark.” As Beast Boy groaned and buried his face in his hands, he snickered. “I had no idea Raven cared about Mega Monkeys. She always gave it a bad rap.”

Slumping into his seat like withering leaf, Beast Boy glared at the title screen. Pixelated clouds crawled across a cerulean sky. A monkey bounced up and down on a scarlet spring, performing a variety of spins and somersaults while enemies passed by him in the background. He thumbed the start button, his failure fresher than an open wound, and he chuckled the controller, watching it bounce off the GameStation.

Rolling his eyes, Cyborg leaped over the couch. To say Beast Boy was acting strange was an understatement. He adored Mega Monkeys, memorizing level layouts and special character abilities from past entries in the series. He blazed through every stage in the previous game when they returned from their battle against the Brotherhood of Evil to prepare himself for the newest game, and he reveled in the enhanced single player campaign once he got his hands on a copy, finding many hidden routes and secret boss rooms much to his starry-eyed delight.

Together, they had stayed up late one night after their triumph and immersed themselves in the co-op mode. As the moon reached her highest point in the sky, Cyborg had noticed Beast Boy’s thumbs moving slower. A haze fogged his vision as he made beginner mistakes. Slipping off the level, miscalculating a jump, or shooting Cyborg’s monkey with an electro-laser, his errors seemed to worsen as the game dragged on until Beast Boy uttered a hollow laugh and said he was done for the night.

Taking the controller, Cyborg hit the start button and leaned back. He flicked the analog stick and scrolled through the extended cast of monkeys, saying, “You got somethin’ on your mind.”

“What gave it away? Tossing the controller?” He straightened, clapping his hands onto his knees and smirking. “It was tossing the controller, right?”

“Yeah, that might’ve been it.” Cyborg picked his character, a robotic chimp with dual laser arms. Out of the corner of his eye, he saw Beast Boy drag his thumbnail along his cuticles, paying only half a mind to the game as he began firing at enemy mooks.

Silence followed like a cool breeze. Electronic blasting and shrill squeaking filled the void between them. Occasional harsh clicks from Cyborg’s controller intermixed with the background music’s chaotic drumming and blaring horns as he moved his character through a maze of peeled bananas and bottomless pits.

“I saw her again,” Beast Boy said, resting his knuckles to his cheek.

His thumb hovered over the pause button, but he continued playing. “Saw her?”

Swallowing down her name, Beast Boy closed his eyes. He still felt the students gather around and through them until she became nothing more than a shadow on his thoughts. Lifting his head back, he muttered, “I met Terra again.”

“We know you did. That’s-”

“No, no, I mean I met her again again.” He leaned forward and wrung his hands together, his brows knitting. “When you guys were fighting that...thing, I was with Terra.”

His breath caught in his throat. He paused his game, the screen idling on his monkey in the middle of jump. Setting the controller on his thigh, he gazed down at Beast Boy.

“She was...” He unclenched his fist, letting it rest in-between the couch cushions. “I think she was happy. Maybe.” He puffed out a

chuckle. “She didn’t study for her geometry test.”

She had slipped into the shadows as students crossed between them. Each backwards step in that dim hallway felt like a mile stretching between them. The distance seemed immeasurable and insurmountable, as if he would never be able to reach out to her and offer his hand like he had done many times before.

Even though Beast Boy trusted Terra’s decision, it broke his heart like a fist smashing through a mirror. Terra had meant the world to him. She was different from the other Titans, accepting his jolly, joking persona without ever sneering or brushing him aside. She was a traumatized girl, which skewed her perception and trust. When he thought back to his time with Mento, he could understand very well why she couldn’t open up to them even during her most wretched moments.

Cyborg followed Beast Boy’s thousand-yard stare as he peered back to the game. He seemed to be leering through the screen to the outside, taking in invisible clouds and a vacant sky. It was the same pitiful expression Cyborg had seen too many times crossing Beast Boy’s features. He knew how special Terra was to him, how she befriended him over with true sincerity and kindness, a genuine interest in being with him only for those feelings to become contaminated by a monster and her own inability to trust them.

“You did your best, BB. So did she.”

He carefully chose his words and let them linger. Waiting for Beast Boy to reply, Cyborg turned towards him and wrapped his strong arm around his narrow shoulders. He drew his friend closer to him when he lowered his chin to his chest, the faint scent of sea salt drifting in from an open window.

“It was tough, huh? Seeing and talking to her again.”

“Yeah, dude. I kept asking her join.” He shrugged. “I guess Terra re-

ally wants to move on.”

“Letting her go doesn’t mean we gotta forget her. We can still check in from time to time. Make sure she’s okay.” He chuckled. “Maybe she’ll even change her mind one day and come back. It’s all up to her.”

Beast Boy sucked down a breath, held it, and then exhaled in a deep sigh. He clung to the faint hope that she would one day return with a smile and open arms just as she had done with the sun setting behind her. He knew they could help her with whatever she needed, but Terra had made her decision and trekked down a path with trembling fists swinging at anyone who tried shoving her off.

“And even if she doesn’t, that’s okay. We’ll keep looking out for each other like we always have.” Cyborg rubbed a knot out Beast Boy’s shoulder, his tenseness reminding him of the time he had become a snarling beast. “Right, man?”

A flock of seagulls soared past the windows. They crooned and squawked, filling the silence which followed his tender words. Their light gray feathers fluttered in the wind, some of them flying off from a particularly harsh gust, reminding them of the way her hair billowed in that same breeze when she stormed by on her boulder.

“Hey, Cy?”

“Yeah?” He waited with bated breath, his eyes slightly widening.

Beast Boy slowly bobbed his head. He leaned back into the couch, his gaze pinpointed on to something Cyborg couldn’t see. He tried following his deep green eyes, but nothing seemed out of the ordinary in the living room.

Keeping his grip steady on his shoulder, he lowered his voice and asked, “You gonna be okay?”

“I think...” He smiled, the corners of his mouth dimpling. “...I think

we all are. Yeah, I think we're all gonna be okay." Rubbing his neck, he snickered. "Sorry for getting sappy there, dude."

"Hey, I like a sappy Beast Boy over a miserable one." He gently elbowed his shoulder and beamed brighter than the sun. "Now, you wanna get in the game or am I gonna beat Raven's score by myself?"

"Oh, let's do it!"

He swiped the controller off Cyborg's thigh and exited his game. As Cyborg rolled his eyes and lamented getting off of the couch to get another controller, Beast Boy felt like he could smile forever.

They were both in better places. She was safe in her school with her tight knit friends. Surrounded by the Titans and their allies, so was Beast Boy. They endured trauma and hardship in their lives, culminating into a whirlwind admiration for each other, which quietly ended as they marched on their separate paths.

Yet, the future wasn't set in stone. The roads they journeyed could very well cross as they continued forward. If that day arrived, as Beast Boy shared a smile with Cyborg, he hoped they all could meet Terra again to say what was left unsaid.









PLAYER 1 LOSES :(

NOVA

K.O!!

PLAYER 2 WINS!!! :D

CHIPS!

INJUSTICE 2









MENU ALL YOU CAN EAT
食べ放題
FRIED FISH
揚げ魚
SUSHI
寿司















Photograph

Written by: Nightglider124

Drops of rainfall pattering against the window pane was what tore him from sleep; his eyes cracking open just enough to glare at the outside world. The inky night sky went about its business as the rain continued to assault the city, barely making an impact on the never-ending waves of the sea, clambering over one another to see who would hit the bank of the island first; like some kind of race for mother nature's own amusement.

He had intended to simply fall back to sleep just by closing his eyes but it was proving a lot more difficult than he'd first anticipated.

Dick waited for what felt like an eternity before he sighed, further irritated by the incessant ticking of the clock on the bedside table; as if mocking his bout of insomnia by flashing '2am' at him.

Gently, he dropped a kiss on his wife's shoulder, using the arm draped over her waist to give her a loving squeeze before he turned away completely, slipping out from beneath the covers to take a late night stroll.

Running a hand through his mess of ebony locks, Dick yawned and stumbled down the long hallway of the tower, trying to think of what he could do to tire himself out again.

He stopped just outside his office and chewed on his lower lip; there was a mission report waiting to be completed and despite not exactly being in the mood to analyse their latest battle, he knew it would be the perfect remedy.

Heading inside and flicking the switch, Dick pulled a face at the dim glow of light that swallowed up his desk and nothing beyond.

He rubbed his jaw and sat back in the chair, letting his eyes wander across the paperwork, strewn all over the surface of the desk. He reached for a pen and got to work, inputting details wherever necessary.

Leaning his head into the palm of his hand, Dick tapped the pen against his chin whilst stifling a yawn that threatened to tear free.

With a shake of his head, he sat back and opened the top drawer of his desk; the place he liked to store any small pieces of evidence or notes that may prove useful to him.

As he scooped the pile of notes out from its hiding place and dumped it onto his desk, he noticed a fluttering out of the corner of his eye.

It was quick but he caught it.

A small rectangle shape that appeared to be some kind of photograph lay face down; flat against the carpet of his office.

Tilting his head and furrowing both brows in confusion, he leaned down and picked it up, slowly turning it over to peer at the image it bestowed.

His expression shifted from surprise and settled to a look of nostalgia; the small smile that only came with a gust of reminiscence curving his lips upward.

Doing a mental calculation, he deduced that the photo must have been at least 10 years old, if the dulled vibrancy and discoloured edges were anything to go by.

Casting his mind back to the day the photo was taken, his smile broadened and blue orbs softened as memories came rushing back to him.

It had been one of their regular trips to the park; Cyborg being the

one behind the camera, holding it up high enough to capture the whole team.

Beast Boy popped his head up from the bottom of the frame, wearing one of his signature grins; fang poking out with mischief twinkling in his forest eyes; a look he carried straight into adulthood with him.

Starfire sat further back with her legs crossed. She beamed up at the camera with that exuberant glow surrounding her, piquing with the reflective emerald shade in her eyes.

Dick breathed a laugh, peering at his younger self; still donning the colourful Robin suit that had guided the majority of his childhood. He was sat, beside the alien Princess with a serene smile latched to his face; one that spoke volumes of how grateful he was to be spending time with his friends rather than yet another day and night spent with a criminal case.

Raven was sat on Starfire's other side, hood up and over her head, despite the warm rays of sunshine beating against her cloaked figure. She held a book between her fingers, with her nose buried deep within the pages. Her dark, indigo eyes were briefly cast in Cyborg's direction; meeting the gaze of the lens.

Dick chuckled, knowing that the larger Titan had likely prompted her to begrudgingly pay attention before she inevitably returned to her world of scripted fiction.

His eyes glossed over as he immersed himself in the memory of that day. It hadn't been any kind of special occasion, it was just another day.

There was a waver in his chest, a pang of wistfulness gnawing at his heart as he thought back on the simpler times they'd had during their youth. Growing older had not been without its difficulties and hardships for each of them.

Adulthood wasn't all bad of course, but there was so much more to contend with than when they were teens, trying to find their place in the world as a group of heroes. They had established that long ago; their purpose and what they meant for the faces of danger within their town.

The burden felt heavier; shoulders holding more of the world's weight now, more than before. Questions and decisions swirled in each of their minds on a day to day basis.

Marriage, family, loss; what the future held for them as a team.

Life had never exactly been a cakewalk for any of them but he did wonder if they'd made the most of their younger years rather than squander it away. It echoed in his mind, how many times he had pointed out that they weren't kids and yet, now that he was heading towards the third decade of his life; he mused over how wrong he had been and how much more he should have allowed himself to enjoy just being a kid.

He rested his knuckles against his lips, tired, cerulean eyes still trailing over the photograph pinched between his fingers, savouring every little detail that he could recollect from it.

"I thought I might find you here."

Dick swallowed the knee jerk reaction to jump; despite the velvet, smoothness of her voice. He hadn't even noticed the sound of the door sliding open, he'd been so lost in thought.

Swivelling in the chair to face her, he eyed the cami pyjamas she wore, the satin a mere whisper against her skin. He offered his wife a sheepish quirk of the lips.

"I... couldn't sleep..."

She shook her head and smiled back at him, "I can see that."

Crossing the space from the door, Starfire wandered up behind him; pressing a gentle hand between his shoulder blades, the low light reflecting off of her wedding band just enough to remind him of an example of good things that growing older had brought.

Peering over his shoulder, she clicked her tongue, “Are you doing work?”

Dick snorted and patted her hand, “I was going to but I got... side-tracked.”

With that, he offered her the photo, smirking at the not so subtle change of her expression.

Starfire gasped and lifted her hand from his back to hold it. She spun around and sat down on the edge of his desk, letting her legs dangle over.

“Oh! We are so young!” She giggled,

Dick watched her, becoming so aware of how much taller she’d become, how long her hair had grown and how much mature her figure was. It was as if time had escaped them, a thief that no one could see or stop.

A bellowing yawn from outside the room caused the couple to look away from the photograph. Cyborg finished stretching his arms above his head before he turned his body towards the open door of Dick’s office.

He blinked and smacked his lips together, fatigue clinging to him like a blanket,

“What are y’all doin’ up?” He asked,

Dick lifted a dark brow at him, “Could ask you the same thing, Vic.”

The cybernetic man shrugged as he shuffled into the room, “Hell if I know why I’m awake. Battery is only half full. I should still be countin’ sheep.”

Starfire beamed at her brother and waved the image she held whilst Dick laughed, “Look what Richard found!”

Cyborg came closer, taking the snapshot from her.

Dick took a moment to study him, noting he’d gotten taller and older looking in the face, laugh lines beginning to crease within his skin but remaining much the same, save for the upgrades of his robotic armour.

Squinting at first, Vic’s brows rose and he burst into laughter, “Damn, this must be old. You’re still rockin’ the traffic light colours, Dick.”

Starfire stifled a giggle as Dick scowled at his friend, “Oh ha ha.”

“Where’d you find this?”

Dick nudged his head towards the top drawer of his desk where Starfire’s legs now blocked, “In the drawer. It was under a bunch of paperwork at the back.”

“Nice. That’s what ya do with our treasured memories.”

Rolling his eyes, Dick sensed another familiar presence at the threshold of the door,

He looked up and waved to his sister, who looked bewildered by the three of them huddled together as they were, “Join the party, Raven.”

“Is everything okay?” She murmured, crossing her arms and tugging at the sleeve of her grey jersey, loosely hanging off one shoulder,

“Yeah, we’re all good.” He paused, “So, what woke you?”

Raven pulled an irritated face and looked towards the window, where rain continued to pelt everything it could reach, “Storm’s not exactly calming when it’s time to sleep.”

The empath shrugged, “That and Gar kept kicking me in his sleep.”

Cyborg smirked, “How’d you know he ain’t just pretending to get more bed space?”

She gave him a knowing smile, “Because he knows that I’d make him sleepover in the underworld if he did.”

Dick snorted alongside Cyborg and Starfire.

Taking one last look, Cyborg passed the photo along to Raven who peered at it warily,

“What is it?”

Cyborg stared at her, “Rae, I’m not gonna be trickin’ you with some weird picture at 2 in the morning.”

The corners of her lips twisted upward, “Always have to check...”

Raven looked down, examining it, “Wow...” She whispered, a small smile on her face causing each feature to relax. Dick found himself noticing how her face shape had changed over the years, eyes becoming wiser and hair cascading past her shoulders.

“Crazy how much has changed since then.” Dick mumbled,

“And how much hasn’t.”

She pointed at younger self, away with her own imagination as she barely acknowledged Cyborg taking the picture.

“Yeah, I’m pretty sure you’d still demon eyes me if I pulled you away from a book for a photo now.”

Raven smirked, “And you would be right in guessing that.”

Cyborg rolled his human eye and playfully bumped his shoulder against hers before they all froze at the sound of loud groaning from the doorway.

The four of them glanced over to see Beast Boy standing there in his sweats, idly scratching his chest,

“Why is everyone up?” He queried, stumbling into the office and standing beside Raven,

She raised an eyebrow at him, “And what made you get up?”

He grinned, “You weren’t there.”

Raven rolled her eyes, “Idiot.”

Beast Boy spied what Raven had in her hand and excitedly took it from her,

“Hey! Cool! It’s us!”

“Good job in spotting that, grass stain.” Cyborg said, sarcasm drenching his tone, earning an obscene finger gesture from the changeling,

Gar smirked, “Ah, see? Still as handsome now as I was then. You’re all so welcome.”

Raven shook her head, “I’m not even gonna comment.”

“It’s cos’ you know it’s true!” Beast Boy affirmed, dusting off the photo in an attempt to get a better look at himself,

He certainly looked older than the photo; a shadow of stubble gracing his jaw and shaggy hair flopping over his forehead.

Dick smiled quietly to himself, enjoying the familiar banter that was shared between the five of them.

“I don’t know if I should be scared that Dick’s smiling.” Gar mentioned, pulling the man in question from his reverie,

“Huh?” Dick blurted, “Oh... I’m just thinking... those were always good times we had, y’know?”

The people surrounding him; his family for the past 15 or so years all matched his expression, smiling as the rush of reminiscence surged through each of them.

“I miss it sometimes, y’know? Being a kid again...” Beast Boy murmured,

“You never actually grew up, Gar.” Cyborg teased,

“I did so!”

“And the fact that is your responding argument just proves my point.”

Gar opened his mouth to speak again but faltered, clamping his lips together as he leaned forward to give the photo back to Starfire.

Cyborg gave into a loud, belly laugh at the look on Beast Boy’s face and slapped his hands together,

“Alright... enough dwelling on the past for tonight... I’m gonna whip us up some fresh cookies, grab some milk and then head on back to bed. Anyone in?” Cyborg announced, already heading for the door,

Beast Boy’s ears perked at the sound of that as he scampered after his

best friend, "Are you gonna make them with my vegan butter?"

"Pff, you wish."

"Cy! I want cookies too!"

"Then you can bake them... with ya nasty not-butter."

Raven rolled her eyes and trailed after the two, hearing their bickering continue down the hallway, "Some things really don't change."

Starfire giggled and stood up. She gazed down at the photograph for a final time, running her fingertips over it.

She turned to Dick, still sat there smiling fondly and she handed him the picture, "Make sure this does not get lost again, Richard."

He nodded as he took it, watching as she floated out of the room with the purpose of enjoying late night cookies as well.

Dick sighed and ran his eyes over the photograph one last time before he stood up and leaned down to open the drawer but paused, deciding he didn't want to rebury it.

He reached across his desk and cupped a few pins in his palm, sticking the photo right above his desk for him to see every time things got a little chaotic before he nodded to himself and followed after his friends.

A silent reminder that no matter what, they would always be those same kids.

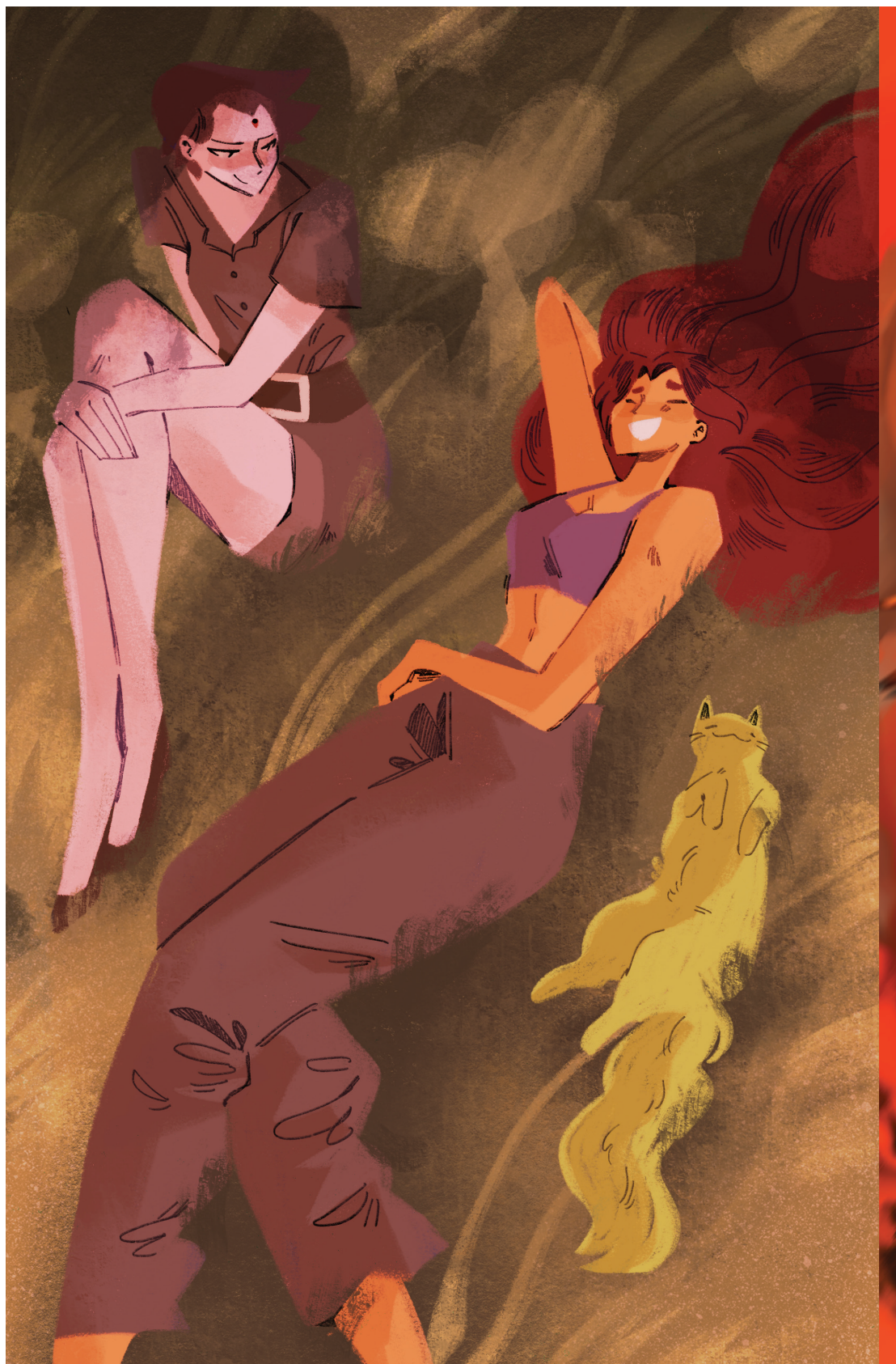


Kiome-yasha



sha.tumblr.com

Michael
Kashan





Things Change

Written by: avachanel

There was something sombre about late summer rain on an autumn Sunday evening. Like the earthy smell of the gentle drizzle could still be present even indoors. The mere memory of cool droplets against flushed skin was a poignant sensory trigger for most. The sound alone was enough to send a shiver down a lonely empath's spine, even whilst indoors.

Not that any of that was necessarily a bad thing. Raven had always liked the rain, especially in the quiet of her room, curled up on her bed with a good book. She quite enjoyed the soft, continuous tapping against the windows, like the clouds themselves were sending her a greeting all the way down here.

Under normal circumstances, the atmosphere in the quaint little bookshop would have been the perfect setting for her. With nothing but the company of age old books, dim lighting, and wooden shelves that could pass for relics, the store was practically a haven. A subtle reminder of home. Or, at least, the one Raven had come to know before the Teen Titans. Azarath.

Her brick of a cell phone then buzzed to life from within the back pocket of her jeans, just as Raven had finished flipping the store sign to CLOSED and locked the front doors. The rain was still coming down, streaking the glass panes in crystal rivulets.

With a heavy heart, she flipped open her phone and promptly read the text from Beast Boy, otherwise known as Garfield Logan in her contacts list.

Running late...Got suckered into debriefing with Mento. Hopefully not for too long. Sorry!

In typical Garfield fashion, there were a series of sad faced emojis following the message, as well as a trail of broken, pink hearts. Raven sighed dejectedly and stuffed her phone back into her pocket, too irritable to reply, and knowing that he'd likely not receive it anyways. Mento hated it when Gar was distracted by his phone during mission debriefs, and so he'd banned phones entirely. If it was an emergency, then that was what the communicators were for. The notion was an obvious slight to the shapeshifter's buzzing social life, and Raven didn't really feel like getting Beast Boy in trouble at the moment.

Besides that, being alone hardly qualified as an emergency situation — especially to someone like Mento — even though, for Raven, it often could feel that way, especially given her lingering fear of the dreary future Starfire had encountered when she'd accidentally travelled through time.

Any other day, Raven might have enjoyed the solitude, where all negative thoughts tended to steer clear of the forefront of her mind. But today wasn't just any other day, unfortunately.

Raven stared out the window with an empty gaze, watching the doom and gloom of the grey, darkening skies, and hugging her bare arms. Another involuntary shiver had her breaking out into goosebumps, fine hairs standing on end, even though it was sufficiently warm in the store.

Tonight marked the ten year anniversary since that fateful day.

Tonight...was Raven's birthday, and the very last thing the empath wanted in the whole wide world, was to be alone.

More than anything, she longed for the company of her closest friends, not strangers or coworkers. But the former Titans were all otherwise indisposed, preoccupied with the new, adventurous lives they led as adults. Full-fledged heroes. No longer teens. No longer under the scrutiny of the older leagues, but since graduated into their leadership roles instead. It made Raven remember her own journey in life; how she'd settled for something more mundane and ordinary

after the hardships of being a heroine. She'd since grown complacent, feeling stagnant in comparison to her comrades, and maybe that was why she'd prepared to make the announcement to them all tonight. So that she could gauge their reactions, and see if she was making the right decision after all.

Only, all the Titans had ended up bailing, one by one, and Raven was left with a crumpled up paper in her hands and infinitely low spirits.

Dick Grayson was now Nightwing, and he was often found prowling the crime-ridden streets of Bludhaven these days. Victor Stone — Cyborg — was a full-time Justice League member, and a leader at that. Starfire, with her unique abilities and alien heritage, spent most of her time as part of a space sub-branch of the Justice League, finding and stopping galactic troubles alongside Green Lanterns, before they made their way to Earth. Beast Boy, now known better as Changeling ever since he'd outgrown his teenage monicker, had taken over the Doom Patrol, and when he wasn't doing that, he was busy mentoring future Teen Titans in Jump City at their previous headquarters.

Reminiscing on how innocent they'd all been back as Teen Titans — and how so much had changed now that they were older — left Raven feeling homesick for the familiar T-shaped Tower she'd spent so many days of her youth. Sometimes, she couldn't fathom how Garfield did it when he'd be training the new recruits. How walking those halls didn't trigger instant nostalgia that made him long for their younger years and former camaraderie.

Feeling numb and even more depressed, the empath walked over to a nearby table, and sat down in one of the old, rickety, wooden chairs. Books littered the top, needing to be organized and priced, but she didn't feel much like doing any work.

Keeping busy was merely her way of staying her mind from more dire anxieties that could render her emotions asunder if she dared let them. Like the bleak future Starfire had seen the day she'd disap-

peared through a time portal when they'd been teenagers. It never escaped Raven that they crept ever closer to that fixed point in time, although Gar liked to joke that he still had an incredible, thick mane of hair, so there was no way the future she saw was going to come to fruition.

The others had laughed, but Raven could never help the unease every time she recalled what her alien friend had witnessed, especially in relation to her. How her unbearable loneliness resulting from a fractured team had spiralled Raven into...a very dark and cold place within herself.

Taking in a sudden, sharp inhale, Raven quickly opened up one of the books and tried to read, tried to force herself away from thinking about that same, seeping cold that worked its way into her very bones and made her want to retreat into herself. She tapped her foot and bounced her knee, a nervous tick as she tried not to listen to the mean, bullying voice in the back of her mind.

Lonely.

She was all alone now, just as Starfire had predicted.

And technically, wasn't the team she'd come to know as a family also split? When was the last time they'd even seen each other, all at once?

They couldn't even make it out for her birthday party, no matter how much Gar had planned it in advance. And now, even he was tied up.

Dick had said he was busy dealing with a batfamily issue in Gotham, and that his flight to Jump City wouldn't be until much later in the night. Cyborg was always held up with League stuff these days, but he did somehow find the time to send her an apology and a sappy happy birthday message. Starfire was totally missing in action, somewhere in space, but Nightwing had assured Raven that Kory sent her best wishes on such a wonderful day.

Wonderful.

It was as if they'd all elected to forget what her birthday had truly signified. How her mere existence had almost cost them everything. Ironically, it was all Raven could think about now, her mind clouded with dreary thoughts, plagued by an unrelenting sadness she couldn't keep at bay.

A crack of thunder outside drew her back to reality and caused her to nearly jump out of her seat, heart lurching to her throat. She was on edge, and the letters on the page of the book she'd opened had begun to blur together. Raven found that she hated being alone, especially on her birthday, and definitely during a thunderstorm. It was almost impossible to remember how she once used to thrive in solitude, and now...she missed her friends more than anything.

The tapping of the rain against the glass doors had somehow changed to frantic knocking, loud and obnoxious and distracting. Raven scrunched up her nose in distaste, annoyed. Customers, despite showing up to a bookstore, often proved unable to read when it came to store hours.

Standing up with a laboured sigh, Raven gradually walked over to the door, ready to give the person a piece of her mind, only to find none other than Dick Grayson standing on the opposite side, soaked and grinning when he saw her through the glass. Raven blinked a few times in confusion, wondering if her mind was playing tricks on her, before quickly unlocking the door and letting him in to escape the early fall weather assault.

"It's pouring cats and dogs out there!" he exclaimed, shaking out his matted, dark hair. He then unzipped his raincoat to reveal a small, colourful gift box tucked safely against his abdomen, away from the rain. "I thought I wouldn't be on time, but it looks like none of the others are here yet," he remarked, taking a gander at the small, empty shop before hanging his heavy, navy blue coat on a nearby rack.

Raven sighed and folded her arms over her chest, but it took all of her willpower to avoid jumping into Richard's arms now that she was no longer by herself. "The get-together was cancelled, since none of you could make it," she informed him rather icily.

Dick blinked a few times in her direction after he'd set the gift onto a nearby table, almost sheepish. He'd lightened up significantly over the years, and Raven knew that a lot of that had to do with Starfire. "Seriously? Not even Gar? This thing was his idea."

Raven shook her head curtly. "Held up in a meeting with Steve."

"Oh." An awkward silence settled between them then, with nothing but the white noise of rain falling in the background. Finally, Dick tucked his hands into his jeans pockets and added, "Well, that sucks."

"Yeah." Raven then side-eyed the present, the wrapping paper a glittery blue and purple, with a matching, chiffon ribbon. "That for me?" She jutted her chin in its direction.

Dick nodded. "Yeah! It's, uh. Not really anything big, I didn't have much time to get you something fancy if I wanted to make that flight, but, it's the thought that counts, right?" He smirked crookedly at her.

A rare smile also unceremoniously tugged at the corners of the empath's mouth. "Sure is. Thanks for coming."

And she meant it. She knew how busy they all were, especially Nightwing. The fact that he hadn't forgotten about her after all easily made her heart swell with unbidden affection. "It's good to see you," she admitted shyly.

"It's your twenty-sixth birthday, Raven. Wouldn't miss it for the world. Ten year anniversary since you kicked it to Trigon. I'd say that's worth celebrating. Speaking of which, no champagne?" He looked about the tables and countertops expectantly, but Raven had forgone any decoration or planning once she'd realized it was going

to be a party for two instead of five.

“Uhm, Garfield was actually supposed to bring the drinks.” She shrugged. “And since it’s Mento’s debrief, he’s probably running about two hours behind schedule.”

Dick sighed and rubbed his temple, but before Raven could offer up a solution in the form of some tea from an ancient, electric kettle, there came another series of knocks on the door, even louder than Nightwing’s had been.

“That him, maybe?” Richard lifted his head, peeking around Raven to see who their latest guest was from through the glass doors.

“Unlikely,” she admitted half-heartedly, not recognizing the familiar knocking sequence that the changeling typically used.

Instead, a tall, hulking, hooded figure stood outside in the rain, and if it weren’t for the familiar blue glow of his mechanical digits as he clutched a wet paper bag in his right hand, Raven might not have recognized him at all.

She let him in immediately, even more shocked at the former Teen Titan’s presence than she’d been of Dick’s. “Cyborg?” Raven furrowed her brows. “But I thought you said you couldn’t make it...”

He’d lifted his hood and revealed a glowing red, cybernetic eye as well as an all too familiar jovial smile. “And miss Rae Rae’s birthday bash? Nah! The League was actually pretty understanding when I explained it to them, and they let me off early. Wally was willing to cover for me.”

“Looks like it might just be a full house after all,” noted Dick, taking Victor by surprise and coming up to greet his old teammate with a beaming grin.

“Well, well. Look what the cat dragged in! Fancy seein’ you here,

birdbrain!”

The two men embraced, with Victor practically crushing Richard and lifting his feet off the ground. Raven snickered to herself at such a familiar scene, the thoughts of a dreary future now long forgotten.

She was surrounded by friends instead, and they were always the barrier that kept her safe.

“What’s in the bag?” Richard asked once he’d been set back down to the ground. “Present?”

Cyborg laughed. “Yeah, of the intoxicating variety. I had Raven’s gift shipped since I didn’t think I’d make it tonight, but I did manage to grab some bubbly on the way, just in case.”

Just as Victor handed the bag over to the detective for inspection, there came another set of knocks on the door, much gentler and quieter now. “Azar, how many people did Garfield invite?!” Raven cried exasperatedly, rolling her eyes.

But truthfully, she was almost giddy, nearly running at the opportunity to greet the next newcomer, and almost dropping her jaw when she saw who it was.

Starfire. It was Starfire that stood outside now, waving and smiling at her old friend, like the rain was hardly a bother compared to her sunshine-like disposition.

She was still very much dressed in her magenta and gold space warrior attire, and the flame red of her hair remained unaffected by the moisture outside. The tall Tamaranean didn’t waste another moment and immediately pulled the shorter girl into a fierce embrace once she was let indoors.

“Raven! It is so good to see you on your birthday!” she chirped, almost choking the empath, but just this once, Raven didn’t quite mind

the affectionate squeeze. She hugged her back, relishing in the same strawberry scent of her luscious, red hair.

“I’m happy that you came,” Raven confessed freely, returning the happily grinning alien’s smile.

“Yes! I was thinking I’d be too far out, but then I found the perfect gift while visiting the moons of Oa, and its curious colours reminded me of you! I just had to give it to you on your birthday, so I begged for a leave of absence, and here I am!” Starfire hastily explained, pulling out a small, brown, cloth sack from her leather satchel. She carefully untied the string to reveal a chunk of moonstone inside, glittering blues and purples and silver whorls, pretty enough to sparkle in the light. “I thought you might like to have a piece of jewelry crafted from it, but I did not have the time, unfortunately.”

“Kory, it’s...thank you, it’s lovely,” Raven cooed, taking the heavy rock into the palm of her hand and admiring it. She then carefully placed it on a nearby table, and the two girls hugged again, gentler this time.

Somewhere behind them, a cork had popped off the bottle of champagne Cyborg had bought, and the two men cheered to its sound. “It’s shapin’ up to be a party, baby! Where the glasses at, Rae?” Cyborg exclaimed enthusiastically.

“Uh, would you be okay with mugs instead?”

Dick and Victor exchanged looks, and then shrugged.

Taking it as a form of their assent, Raven disappeared into the break-room while the former Titans got reacquainted with one another, the sound of idle chit chat keeping a happy smile plastered onto the empath’s face.

It wasn’t until they’d all taken a seat at the table, four mugs of champagne in front of them, reminiscing and sharing, that there’d been yet another knock at the door, this time entirely recognizable to Ra-

ven's trained ears. She'd been enjoying herself so much among the company of her former teammates, that she didn't even want to get up and answer it. So engaged in the conversation, Raven had forgotten entirely all about her phone, which was now lighting up with missed notifications.

"That has to be Beast Boy!" Starfire exclaimed, slamming her fists against the wooden table in excitement. It made the mugs rattle, and Raven stood up to help steady things before they started breaking.

"I'll get it. He's probably worried that I've been ignoring all his messages."

A little woozy from the alcohol — since it was rare that she ever drank at all, and only did so tonight because of the special occasion — Raven stumbled towards the door, feeling abuzz with joy more than anything else.

Gar stood outside in the dark of the moonlight, wearing a simple hoodie, but the rain had long since stopped, and he was carrying a white cardboard box in one hand and a shopping bag in the other. When she opened the door, he rushed inside, right past her. "Oh, good, you're alive! Not like I was freaking out or anything," he drawled sarcastically as he looked for a place to set things down.

Raven rolled her eyes, but nothing could diminish her high spirits. "Relax, I've just been distracted with our party guests," she informed him, nodding towards the full table where all the other Titans had paused to gawk at him.

Gar almost dropped the stuff he was carrying, his jaw hanging open. "Holy shit, you all actually made it?!"

"Just tell me that's birthday cake, and not the vegan kind, grass stain." Cyborg eyed the sealed box in the changeling's hand.

Gar responded by puffing out his chest and displaying the cake

proudly. “I’ll have you know, it’s Raven’s favourite kind of cake, thank you very much; ice cream cake!” He dropped off all the stuff on the table, with Starfire clapping her hands together in elation while Dick and Cyborg dug through the contents eagerly. “Almost melted on the way here but I managed to speed up with the help of a few of my fastest animal buds!” He grinned toothily, fangs on prominent display.

While most of the Titans were all temporarily distracted by the said cake, Gar then took the opportunity to pull Raven into a loving embrace, quickly placing one tender kiss on her forehead — just over the small red chakra — and then one on her nose, followed by a sweet, amicable peck on her lips. “Happy birthday, babe. I’m so glad you’re in my life,” he whispered to her, regarding her with a warm smile and resting his forehead against hers.

Raven inhaled deeply, holding onto him for just a moment longer, lingering in the loving emotions he typically exuded around her. Gar always liked to remind her, on every one of her birthdays, just how wanted she was, and that she meant more than what she’d been raised to believe. Every year, he’d made sure that she knew just how valuable she was to him, just like he had ten years ago. It was why he always insisted on celebrating her birthday no matter what came up. Mento be damned.

You may not like your birthday, but we’re sure glad you were born...

Raven glanced about the store as Gar made to join his friends, opting to add his voice to the ongoing, bustling conversation after embracing them each. It was amazing how easily they all fell back into a familiar groove, like they’d never been apart before.

Things had changed, sure. Subtle changes and big ones, too. Like how Dick had his arm around the back of Kory’s chair, his lazy fingers drawing circles on her arm as she leaned in just a bit closer.

Victor’s robotic armor appeared more advanced now. His parts were always being upgraded ever since he’d joined the League.

Beast Boy — Changeling — had grown taller, and had come to fill out his suit, a formidable superhero not to be taken lightly anymore.

But as much as things had changed, some things had also stayed the same.

Like how she'd opted to remain silent about her announcement, hesitating, the crumpled up letter long since tossed in the waste bin. As if she needed it to relay the news that she'd accepted the offer. Raven had finally decided that she would be joining Constantine and Zatanna's Justice League branch and leaving her mundane job behind her officially. Not even Gar knew yet, and she was still nervous about how they'd all take it.

But they'd shown up, each one of them, and that was still a symbol of hope. That maybe, no matter which way they each drifted in life, they'd always find their way back together.

They were friends and always would be.

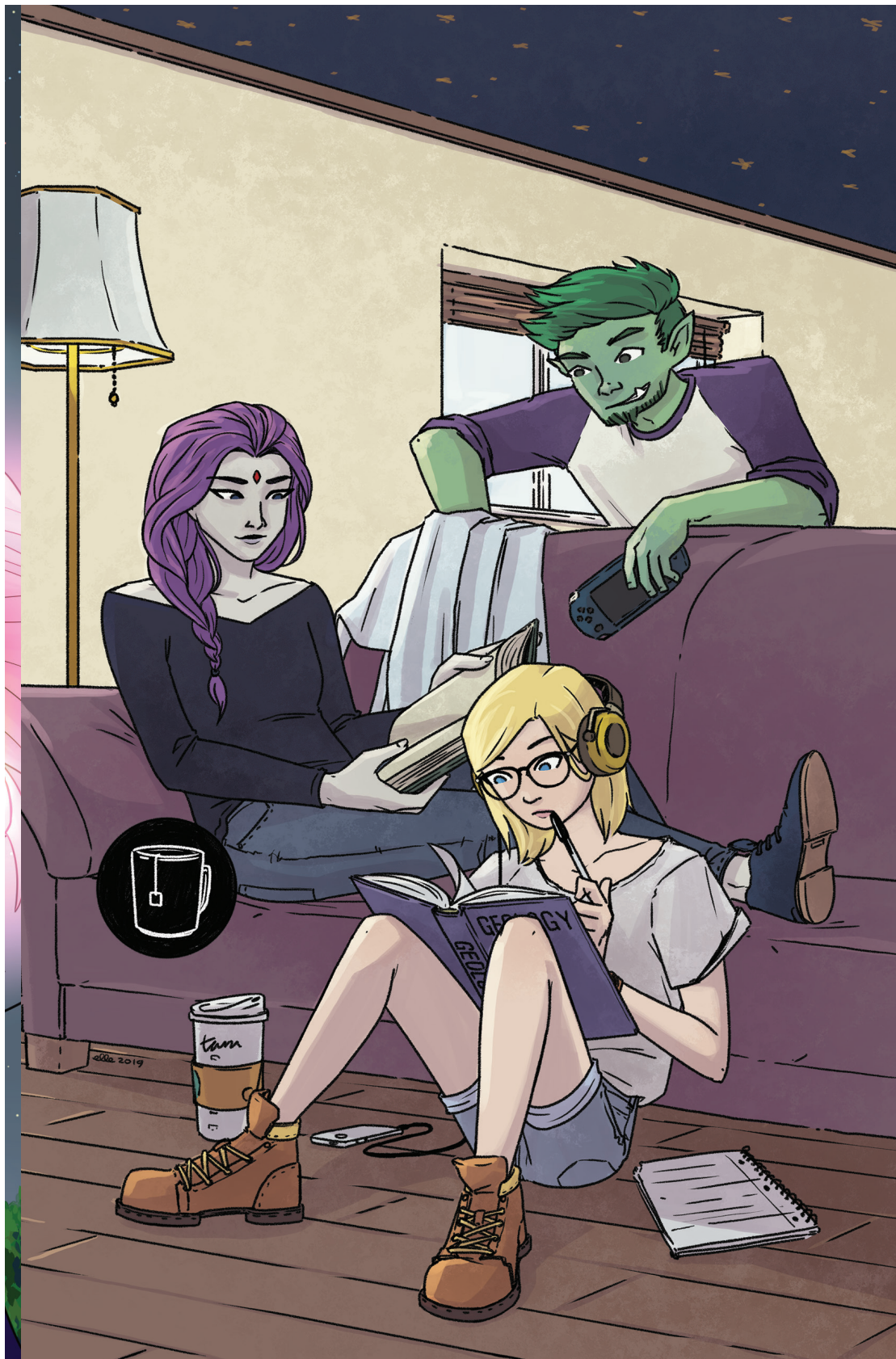
They all very much cared for one another.

And most importantly, they would remain a family.

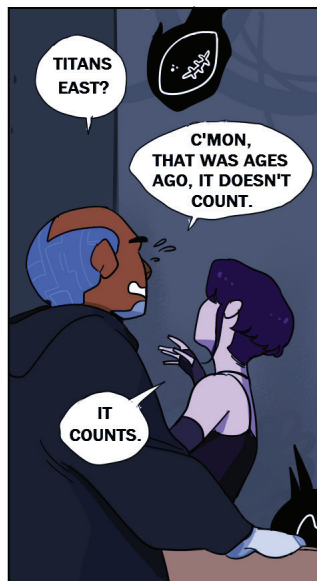
















a reunion, years later, atop the titans tower

hits different, doesn't it?

yeah













Options

by Nocturna IV

Age brings wisdom, time teaches patience and experience strengthens the mind. But age weakens the body, the time has no mercy and experience leaves scars. Not all people can remain heroes indefinitely, even if they want to. And, that profession is very much like the life of a professional athlete. It's usually short. Normally with serious consequences.

And sometimes being a hero isn't the vocation of the whole world, because there are other ways of balancing the bad in the world, it's not always necessary to wear a revealing costume and use words in military code to achieve it.

Sometimes it is essential to take a pedagogical and peaceful path. Because it's much easier for her to be in control of her emotions when she doesn't have to face the fate of the universe. Now, she is wiser and decisions have led to a kind of life she had never imagined for her in her youth. But she is satisfied with her choices.

A retired heroine.

A teacher for others like her.

Not an instructor for future superheroes. Neither the tutor in charge of a group of young heroes ready to hold the universe on their inexperienced shoulders. No. Raven had decided to depart from the caps and masks, she had settled in an ancient monastery in China for children and youth who needed to control their powers or those that had to deal with their burden alone. Her pupils were incredibly varied, simple humans or the youth of other dimensions, fugitives or students from good families. She had taken the path of teaching to help others control their minds, their lives, and their destinies.

If Raven was honest with herself, she wouldn't deny that her time with the Teen Titans had been a blessing. Good friends and a great

family. They had made her feel part of something extraordinary and good. She would never change her past because even bad experiences had ended in sweet memories. But with time, she had encountered the harsh reality. On more than one occasion, her life as a superheroine had come directly in opposition to her emotions and that had almost triggered something in her far worse than any plan of the villain they were fighting.

She had loved her time with the Teen Titans, but the most prudent decision for the well being of the world had been that she didn't fight. Ever. With the Teen Titans, she had learned that her luck wasn't as unique as she had thought. In a small or large extent, others were living with the need to learn and have control over themselves. Other young people were searching, groping and fumbling, for the way to become strong, not physically, but mentally, to save themselves.

And that was exactly why she thought that maybe the solution for her wasn't to fight the bad guys but to accept who she was. Suddenly, everything Raven had learned with the Teen Titans became a knowledge that could be transmitted. Other people could use that wisdom and they might feel that they were not alone.

So, awkwardly and with hundreds of mistakes, Raven left the team and started a new life. She wasn't the only one who decided to take a different path to superheroism.

She looked for others like her, people who had to control an unimaginable power or had inherited some kind of magic or ability that could be incredibly dangerous. She had looked for young people who suffered because their powers could hurt them or others and needed a guide to learn how to control them.

But no matter what path her friends and she chose, they kept in touch. And much more than that, just like a family, they had small routines. And one of those was the visits that her friends made to the monastery every year. They traveled to visit her, but also to talk to her pupils.

Because it didn't matter that she had hung her cloak. She hadn't discarded the importance of saving the world and if some of her pupils

wished to join one of the multiple groups of superheroes and maybe even be a part of the Teen Titans; Raven would be there to support them and give them the ways to achieve their dreams.

Although most of the time, the visit of her friends was just an excuse for her pupils to have some fun and for her ex-teammates to feel young again.

The first one to arrive was Robin, or rather, Nightwing. Right on time, as always, but with his secrecy. Because Nightwing didn't use the monastery doors. He'd simply let himself be seen in the central courtyard. Although Raven had her suspicions on how he managed to trick the security and her magical protections. He is now an older brother, a father figure to many people, but he remains to be a great leader. There, with his superhero clothes, she enjoys watching him. Her pupils, who since morning have been impatient, run towards him to bombard him with questions. The youngest are the bravest, hanging on the male's arms; one of the children even had climbed the back of her friend to get his attention.

She is happy to see him being a hero. That is the place where he belongs. Saving people. Fighting the villains. Simply being an inspiration. Many of her pupils admire Nightwing, the original Robin, the former leader of the Teen Titans. And Raven admits, mentally, that part of that admiration she transmitted to them. Nightwing represents the search of our path, to make your own decisions. When she found out that Robin didn't want to be like Batman, she felt proud. He didn't need to live under anyone's shadow, it was good to see that her friend had decided to overcome his insecurities and start his own life. Teen Titans had been that for them, the place where they had learned to recognize their insecurities and weaknesses. A safe place to meet again.

"Raven!" He finally makes his way through her pupils and reaches her "I'm glad to see you."

She inclines her head slightly and guides him inside the monastery. For a second some children seem to want to follow them, but one look at them is enough to make them go back with the rest.

“You have them under control.”

“It’s not about control, it’s about boundaries.” She responds “Most of them have lived lost, too scared to understand the difference between limits and rules. And the others never had someone to teach them about their power.”

“Limits?” Nightwing looks at her. “Don’t you mean rules?”

“No.” Raven pauses, before continuing with the neutral tone of her voice. “Limits prevent you from falling or hurting yourself in general. Rules, depending on who made them, can be oppressive chains.”

Because she learned that all the rules that she had been given and that she had imposed on herself had been suffocating. What she needed had been limits, boundaries that protected her from danger, but gave her the freedom to be herself.

“I’m always surprised by your wisdom.” He confesses. “How are you?”

“Fine, my mind is always busy, but harmoniously” Raven looks at him “And you?”

“I ‘d like to say that I’m fine in a harmonious way.” He jokes “But I’m fine, chaotically and hurriedly.”

“I think that’s the only way you know how to be fine.”

He stops and looks genuinely surprised. Nightwing crosses his arms and a smirk forms on his lips.

“Was that a joke, Raven?”

She also crosses her arms and inclines her face.

“Is that a childish question, Robin?”

The corridor is filled with the laughter of the man. In the past, the two of them had been the serious ones in the group, but they had relaxed. Raven still had a controlled attitude and he had found calm.

They arrived at the yard where a group of pupils waited. Nightwing

and she say their goodbyes and he starts his class with the awaiting children. Raven stays around for a moment, listening to the hero's speech, full of conviction and confidence. A natural leader.

Soon after, while she is heading towards the entrance of the monastery, she is attacked by a hug. Starfire lifts her from the floor until they almost reach the ceiling of the corridor and with a lot of clumsiness, Raven tries to match the affective gesture. Both separate, staying above the floor and Starfire takes her face, unconsciously crushing her cheeks.

"Star..."

"I'm so happy to see you!"

Her cheeks are pressing against her skull.

"Starfire... let me go." She orders.

"Oh! Friend Raven, I'm so sorry. I didn't want to exceed my display of affection."

At last, she could feel the blood running down her cheeks.

"Starfire, you were here last week."

"But still!"

It doesn't surprise her when she listens the screams of her pupils approaching. As a general rule, they were all very calm. But they rarely received visitors. Starfire is famous for her stories and many of them looked forward to her visits to hear about her tales and anecdotes, especially when she performed some scenarios. Starfire always had new stories, some rescue mission or a trip between dimensions. His pupils adored her. So she says goodbye to her friend while she is carried away by the pupils and Starfire promises to chat at night.

Raven takes a deep breath. And that was all the time she had before she heard her name being shouted from the main courtyard.

"Cyborg..." she murmurs, flying towards the origin of the sound.

And she sees the huge futuristic ship that flies silently over her peaceful monastery.

"I hope that has good camouflage," Raven says as she manages to fly at the height of Cyborg, who opened the door of the ship to descend a huge footbridge so the adventurous pupils can go up and out to the outside world. "This place is secret, after all."

"Raven!" Cyborg winks at her, stepping aside as the first youngsters board the ship. "You have to trust my knowledge."

"I do, but I don't trust your instinct to show off in front of the public."

"Oh, look at yourself; you've become a very protective mother." Cyborg leans against the doorframe and smiles. "Don't you want to come with us? I will take them under the sea."

"After calling me mom, you still want to be near me?" She denies. "You're lucky there are too many witnesses here."

"I don't know, Raven, you haven't used your powers in a long time. Do you think you could beat a professional superhero like me?"

She cannot help it, before realizing it; she feels the corner of her lip rising slightly. Cyborg smiles with victory and she seriously wants to throw him towards the nearest mountain.

"Just... try not to lose any of them."

"That only happened once!"

"Exactly."

She descends to the floor, listening to her friend justify himself and make excuses. She just makes a gesture of dismissal and sees the ship disappear incredibly fast. She expects that when Cyborg said sea, he referred to the one on this planet.

Finally, Raven sits on one of the stone chairs in the courtyard. Her eyes follow the small lizard that comes out of hiding and begins to climb up her leg. Her monastery is very high up in the mountains and it's always cold. So, that appearance isn't even a good camouflage.

“Beast Boy” she greets when the lizard stops on her knee.

The animal transforms and she narrows her eyes. Now she has a green adult, in civilian clothes, sitting on her lap.

All of her friends had grown. She became the shortest of the group and although she considers herself quite strong, that doesn't justify Beast Boy getting comfortable on her lap.

“For this Samhain, I have behaved very well, so I want a flying broom, a new cauldron...” he begins to enumerate “And a choker with skulls.”

Raven pushes him off harshly because of such a bad joke.

He manages to maintain balance and never reaches the ground, where he should be. Instead, he sits next to her.

“Grow up.” She orders.

“But that would make you very sad, honey.”

As always, Beast Boy is the most cheerful of all and keeps doing things as if they were teenagers. He tries to lean on her lap, but Raven dodges him. Beast Boy laughs and a big smile forms on his lips.

“I'm glad to see you're fine, Raven.”

He has a strange way of reading her humor but rarely fails. Sometimes she feels that she has a younger brother when she spends time with him.

“How long have you been here?” Raven asks.

“Before Robin arrived.”

“Nightwing.” She corrects.

“He'll always be our Robin.” He responds, with a sweet smile. “Like me, I'm still Beast Boy for you, even though I don't do anything heroic anymore.”

Raven just looks at him reproachfully, because that's not true. Okay, maybe he's not a superhero anymore, but Beast Boy has dedicated

his time to research and save the wildlife. Not only that, he has created shelters for children. Interestingly enough, the two of them work with children and help them. Surely, nobody would've guessed it. But Beast Boy had been orphaned more than once. He knows how it feels not having a family or feel abandoned. So he has rescued children who were forced to work, to fight in wars or have been abandoned in the jungle and he has given them another chance.

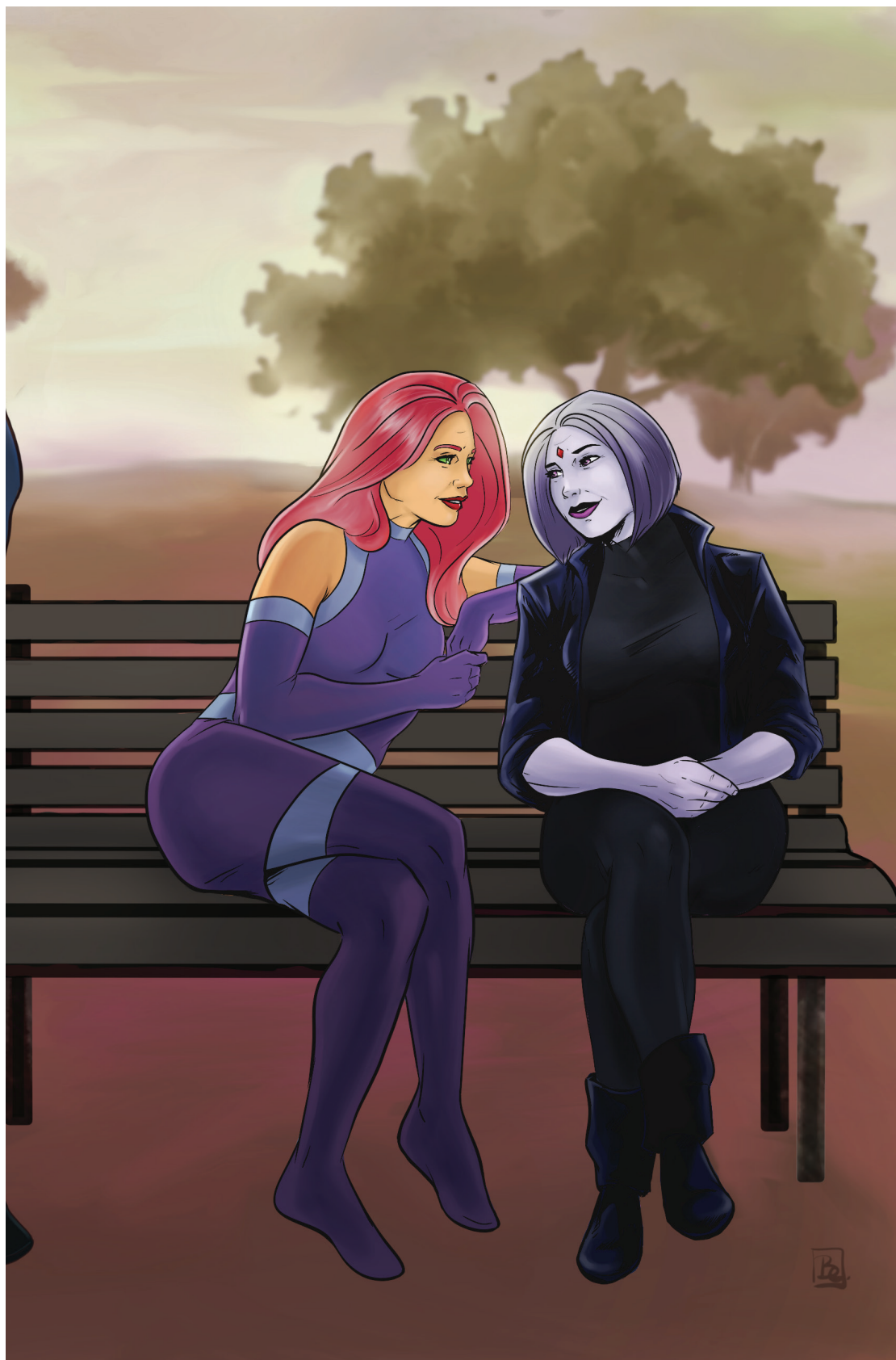
And Beast Boy isn't a father figure. He is the fun older brother and sometimes that's all a child needs.

"Come with me." Raven responds.

Both walk towards the back door of the monastery, where a group of pupils expects to go to explore the forests, rivers, and waterfalls, they are young people who want to learn more about nature. They don't want to fight or go on adventures, they want to have fun like the children they are. Something that Beast Boy is happy to teach them. So, Raven sees them leave and she returns to the main courtyard, where the lagging pupils meet her. Because there are always people, who, like her, prefer peace and calm. So they gather to meditate and take their time until everyone returns. She tries to concentrate, but as always, when her friends come to visit, there is a warm feeling in her heart that distracts her.

All of them took different options when they grew up, different paths. But they are still family. And although Raven will never admit it, that makes her very happy.





MANY YEARS AGO, MY FATHER HELPED FOUND A TEAM OF TEEN HEROES...



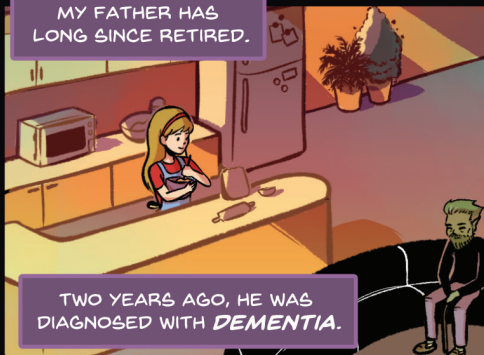
...THE *TEEN TITANS*.

AS THEY AGED, THE TEAM DROPPED THE *TEEN* IN ITS NAME, AND BECAME--



--THE *TITANS NETWORK*.

MY FATHER HAS LONG SINCE RETIRED.



TWO YEARS AGO, HE WAS DIAGNOSED WITH *DEMENTIA*.

SOMETIMES, I'LL CATCH HIM WANDERING AROUND...



... A DISTANT LOOK IN HIS EYES.

IT MAKES ME WONDER WHAT HE'S THINKING...

...WHEN HE GOES FOR THESE AIMLESS WALKS.

A PART OF ME *HOPES*...



...IT'S HIM *REMEMBERING*.

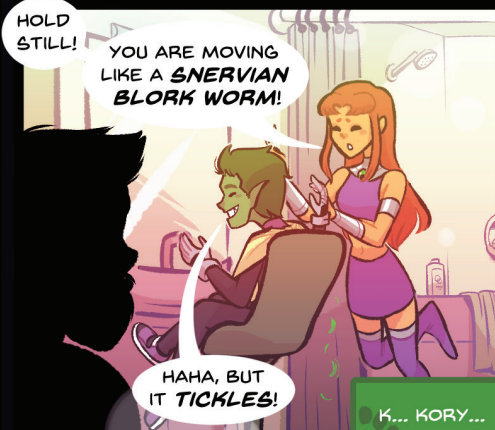


HA
HA
HA

IT TICKLES,
MAMA!



HOLD STILL,
MY LITTLE
WIGGLE WORM!



HOLD
STILL!

YOU ARE MOVING
LIKE A *SNERVIAN*
BLOK WORM!

HAHA, BUT
IT *TICKLES*!

K... KORY...

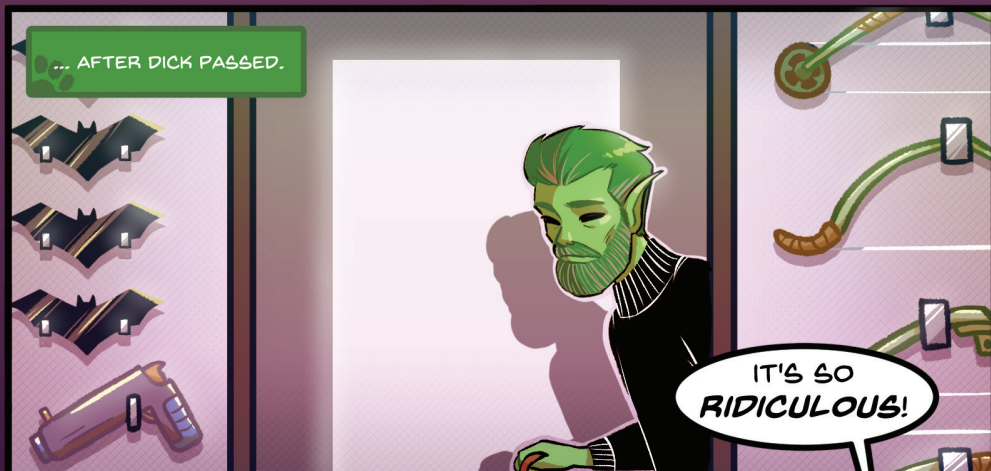
... I MISS HER.



HOLD STILL!

TEE
HEE

KORY LEFT. SHE WENT
TO SPACE AFTER...





MY MEMORY'S NOT AS
GOOD AS IT USED TO BE.

SOMETIMES, I
FORGET THINGS...

DON'T
FORGET
XENO



... ALRIGHT, A
LOT OF THINGS.

BUT I HOPE I NEVER
FORGET THEM...

... OR YOU.



BECAUSE I *MISS*
YOU, MY LOVE...



... I *MISS*...



... ALL OF YOU.

REMEMBERING

LOU BUGGINS WRITER
SAMARASKETCH ARTIST

A FANCOMIC FOR THE *THINGS CHANGE* ZINE



Contributors



Dar
@dar_alt



Moga
@mogadeer-art



Sib
@gothamtwinks



Akittyk
@akittyk



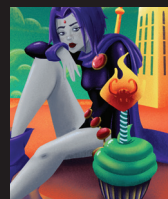
CY
@sconesumer



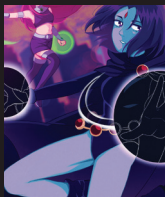
Elena Rocchini
@elena-rocchini



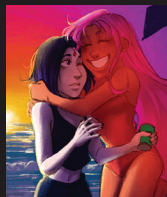
Eli
@elidritchhorror



YodaCera
yodacera.wixsite.
com/yodacera



Lucian
@lucianluminoir



Banana Donut
@banana_donut_



animetendofreak
@animetendofreak



Jaskal Poe Flynn
@jaskdraws



Contributors



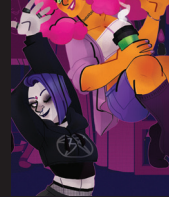
Soap
@soapyakships
t



Novva
@novva
t



RaccoonArtist
@raccoonartist
ig



Airafleeza
@airafleeza
t



Caerulearosae
@caerulearosae
t



Carlodraws
@carlodraws
ig



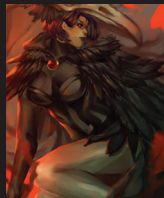
Elle
@elle-arts
t



Lycheeluv
@_lycheeluv
t



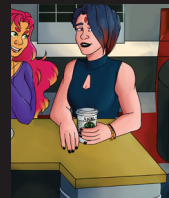
mielzy
@pomelo.png
ig



NHLO
@nhlo_art
t



N. Queen
@nqueenart
t



Rachel Sajban
@dracos.quill
ig

Contributors



Hella Saiko

@hellasaiko



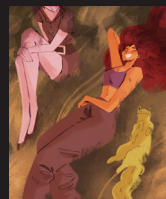
Tinzarone

@tinzarone



Alyssa Ortiz

@kiome-yasha



Roshambaux

@roshambaux



Birdykane

@birdykane



AlessandraDC

@alessandra_d_c_



Samarasketch

@samarasketch



Hana Hazel

@badnightstar



Scar

@scartale-an-un-
dertale-au



Beecher-Arts

@Beecher-Arts



atinyhiccup

@atinyhiccup



Contributors



kibasnipr
@kibasnipr
t



Nightglider124
ff.net: ~nightglid-
er124



Ava Chanel
ff.net: Ava-Chanel



Lou Buggins
@loubuggins
t  



Nocturna IV
Ao3: NocturnaIV



Fallowfield
Ao3: Fallowfield

MODS

Head Mod Kami
@kaminam-i
t

Finance Mod Miles
@baitsberry
t

Intern Mod Lou
@loubuggins
t  

Graphics/Formatting
Mod Colours
@coloursdraws
t 

Intern Mod Arr
@Starr-lights
t

